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NEW ANGLICAN COUNCIL
INAUGURATED IN AFRICA

CHILEMA, Malawi -- The Church in Africa has "come of age," according to the official statement to the Churches released on the final day of the inaugural meeting of the Council of Anglican Provinces of Africa (CAPA), held at Chilema Lay Training Center, Malawi, September 17-25.

The Rev. David Birney, Staff Officer for Overseas Personnel at the Episcopal Church Center, was an observer at the Council meeting.

In its statement, the Council hailed the greater cooperation among Anglicans in Africa, paid tribute to those Christians who have suffered at the hands of hostile regimes and called for greater attention by the Churches to training at all levels.

The fact of the meeting itself, the statement said, indicated a growing maturity within the whole Church.

It added: "We thank God for his strength. In recent years the conduct of some governments has tested our faith. By the grace of God we have stood firm and a new chapter of Christian heroism has been written."

On Church-State relations the statement called on government to be "continually adapting its institutions in the interests of all its citizens" and the Church to be "the vanguard upholding truth, justice and freedom."

Forty delegates -- lay and clerical as well as episcopal representatives from nine Anglican Provinces including the Indian Ocean -- took part. In addition to Father Birney from the U.S., there were observers from the United Kingdom and Australia. The meeting is the successor to the Conference of Anglican Archbishops of Africa.

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Each Province presented a report on the work of the Church in its area.

A heavy agenda covered a wide range of issues including the ordination of women, human rights, Islam, relationships with the African Free Churches and Roman Catholics, evangelism, Partners in Mission, in-service training for clergy and theological education by extension.

The major initiative of the Council was to approve in principle the establishment of an Anglican Pastoral Training Center for the whole of Africa. It is proposed that the new center will supplement the work of existing theological and Bible colleges with specialised training in pastoral skills at both the pre-service and in-service stages and will serve as a center for strategic planning for mission for the whole of Africa.

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